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CERTAIN

Propositions,

By which the

DOCTRIN

OF THE

H. Trinity

Is so Explain'd, according to the
Ancient Fathers, as to speak it not Con-
tradictory to Natural Reason.

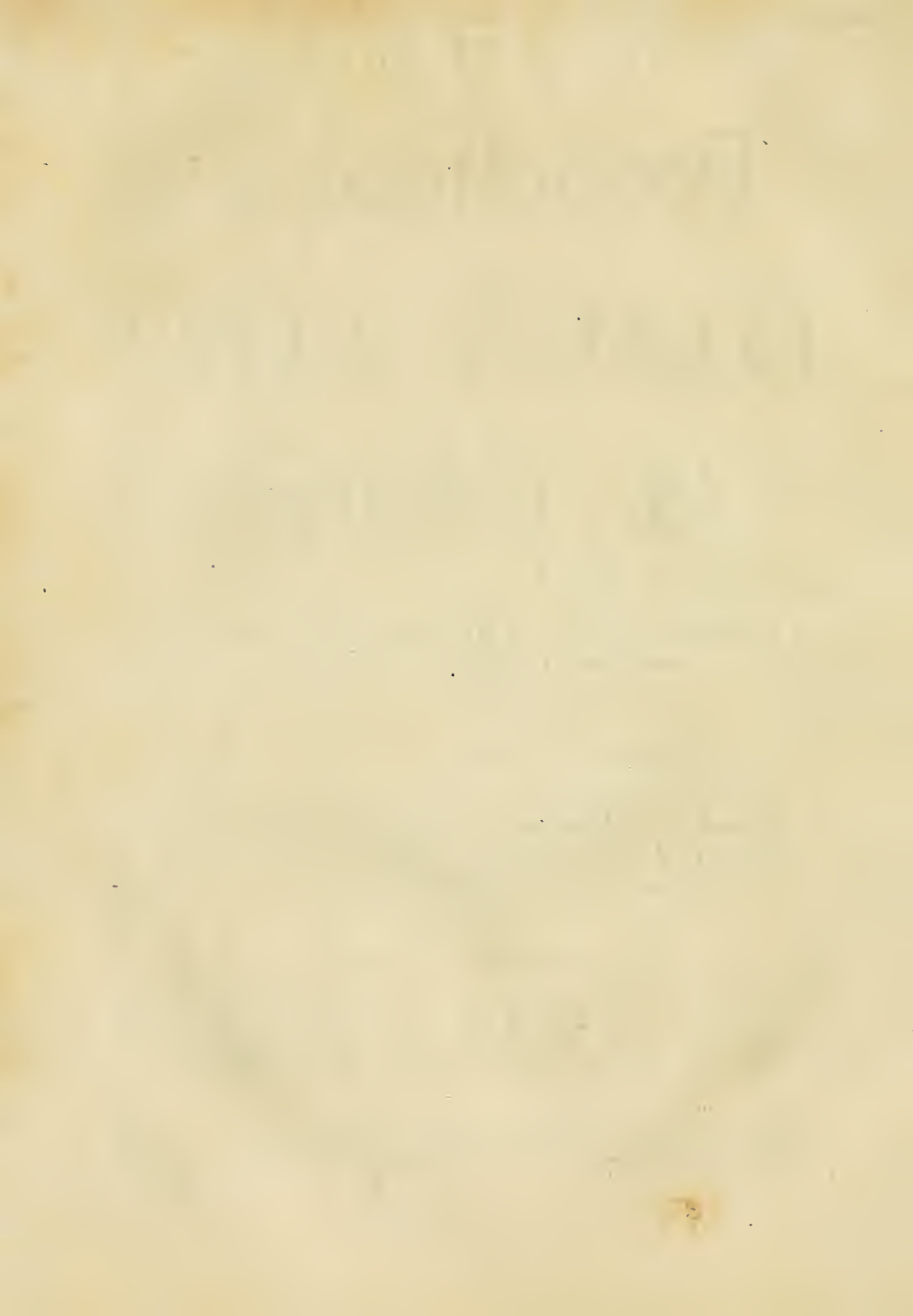
TOGETHER

With a Defence of Them, in Answer to the
Objections of a *Socinian* Writer, in His Newly
Printed *Considerations on the Explications of the*
Doctrin of the Trinity : Occasioned by these
Propositions, among other Discourses.

In a Letter to that Author.

L O N D O N,

Printed for *Brabazon Aylmer* at the Three Pidgeons
in *Cornhil*, 1694.





CERTAIN

Propositions, &c.

1. **T**HE Name of *God* is used in more Sences than one in Holy Scripture.

2. The most Absolutely Perfect Being, is God in the Highest Sence.

3. *Self-Existence* is a Perfection, and seems to be the Highest of all Perfections.

4. God the Father alone, is in reference to His *Manner of Existence* an Absolutely Perfect Being ; because He alone is Self-Existent.

5. He alone, consequently, is Absolutely Perfect, in reference to those Perfections, which do præsuppose Self-Existence.

6. Those Perfections are *Absolute Independence*, and *Being the First Original of all other Beings* : In which the *Son* and the *Holy Ghost* are comprehended.

7. All *Trinitarians* do Acknowledge, That these Two Persons are from God the Father. This is affirmed in that Creed which is called the *Nicene*, and in that which falsely bears the Name of *Athanasius* : Tho' with this difference, that the *Holy Ghost* is asserted in them, to be from the *Son* as well as from

the *Father*. Wherein the *Greek Church* differs from the *Latin*.

8. It is therefore a flat Contradiction, to say that the Second and Third Persons are Self-Existent.

9. And therefore it is alike Contradictious, to Affirm them to be Beings Absolutely Perfect in reference to their *Manner of Existence*; and to say that they have the Perfections of *Absolute Independence*, and of being the *First Originals of all things*.

10. Since the *Father* alone is a Being of the most Absolute Perfection, He having those Perfections which the other Two Persons are incapable of having, He alone is *God* in the Absolutely Highest Sense.

11. And therefore our Blessed Saviour calls Him, *The onely True God*, Joh. 17. 3. *This is Life Eternal to know Thee the onely True God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent*. And it is most Absurd to think, That in these Words, and the following Prayer, He did address Himself to the Three Persons of the Trinity conjunctly, since throughout the Prayer He calls this *Onely Truly God* his Father; and calls Himself twice His *Son*, before these Words. Not to mention the Absurdity of making our Lord to pray to Himself, or of distinguishing Himself from those Three, of which Himself was one. If such a Liberty as this, in interpreting Scripture, be allowable, what Work may be made with Scripture!

12. Our Lord calls the Father, *The Onely True God*, because He only is *Originally*, and of *Himself* God, and the First Original of all Beings whatsoever. As he calls him the *Onely Good*, saying, *There is none Good*
but

but God, because He alone is *Originally* so, and the Spring of all that Good which is in other Beings.

13. The God-head; or God in this Highest Sence, can be but *One Numerically*. Of which the best Philosophers were satisfied by their Reason; and therefore the *Oneness* so frequently affirmed of Him in *Scripture* is a *Numerical Oneness*.

14. There seems to be neither Contradiction, nor Absurdity, in supposing the First Original of all things, to be productive of other Beings so Perfect, as to have all Perfections, but that of *Self-Existence*, and those which are necessarily therein implied.

15. Supposing any such Beings to have immediately issued forth from that infinite Fullness, and Fecundity of Being, which is in the Deity, each of them must have a Right to the Name of *God*, in a Sence next to that in which it is appropriated to the *Father*; since they have all the Perfections of the *God-head*, but those that must of Necessity be peculiar to *Him*.

16. It is evident from the *Holy Scripture*, That the *Son* and *Holy Spirit* are *such* Beings, viz. That they have all Divine Perfections but the forementioned: Such as *Unlimited Power, wisdom, Goodness*, &c.

17. And they are always spoken of in *Scripture*, as *Distinct Beings* or *Persons*, according to the Proper Signification of this Word, both from the *Father* and from *Each Other*. Nor are so many Men or Angels more expressly distinguished as different Persons or Substances, by our Saviour or his Apostles, than the Father, Son and Holy Ghost still are.

18. It

18. It is a very presumptuous Conceit, That there can be no way but that of *Creation*, whereby any thing can be immediately and onely from God, which hath a distinct Existence of its own. Or, That no Beings can have Existence from Him, by way of *Necessary Emanation*: Of which we have a *Clearer Idea* than of *Voluntary Creation*. It is the Word of the Ancients, both Fathers and Philosophers; nor can a better be found to express what is intended by it, *viz.* A more excellent way of existing, than that of *Creation*.

19. It is no less presumptuous to Affirm, That it is a Contradiction to suppose, That a Being can be from *Eternity* from God the Father, if 'tis possible it may be from Him, in a more Excellent Way than that of *Creation*. And we have an Illustration of both these Propositions, by something in Nature. For, according to our Vulgar Philosophy, *Light* doth exist by necessary Emanation from the *Sun*, and therefore the Sun was not before the Light which proceeds from thence, in Order of *Time*, tho' it be in Order of *Nature* before it. And the Distinction between these Two Priorities, is much Elder than *Thomas Aquinas*, or *Peter Lombard*; or any *School-man* of them all, or *Christian-man* either.

20. And if any thing can be from another thing by way of *Necessary Emanation*, it is so far from a Contradiction to suppose, that it must only be in order of nature before it; that 'tis most apparently a Contradiction to suppose the contrary.

21. Our 18th. and 19th. Propositions do speak our Explication of the H. Trinity, to be as contrary

trary to *Arianism* as to *Socinianism*; since the *Arians* assert that there was at least a moment of time, when the Son was not; and that He is a Creature.

22. Altho' we cannot understand, how it should be no Contradiction to affirm, That the Three Persons are But *One Numerical Being*, or Substance; yet hath it not the least shadow of a Contradiction to suppose, That there is an unconceivably close and inseparable *Union* both in Will and Nature between them. And such a Union may be much more easily conceived between *them*, than can that Union which is between our *Souls and Bodies*; since *these* are Substances which are of the most unlike and even Contrary Natures.

23. Since we cannot conceive the First Original of All things, to be more than *One Numerically*; and that we acknowledg the now mentioned Union between the three Persons, according to the Scriptures, together with the intire dependence of the two latter upon the First Person, The Unity of the Deity is, to all intents and purposes, as fully asserted by us, as it is necessary or reasonable it should be.

24. And no part of this Explication, do we think Repugnant to any Text of Scripture; but it seems much the Easiest way of Reconciling those Texts, which according to the other Hypotheses are not Reconcilable, but by offering manifest violence to them.

25. The *Socinians* must needs Confess, that the Honour of the Father, for which they express a very Zealous Concern, is as much as they can desire taken care of by this Explication. Nor can the Honour
of

of the *Son* and *Holy Spirit* be more Consulted, than by ascribing to them all Perfections, but what they cannot have, without the most apparent Contradiction, ascribed to them.

26. And we would think it impossible, that any Christian should not be easily perswaded, to think as honourably of his Redeemer and Sanctifier as he can, while he Robs not God the Father for their Sake ; and offers no violence to the Sence and Meaning of Divine Revelations, nor to the Reason of his Mind.

27. There are many things in the notion of *One God*, which all Hearty Theists will acknowledge necessary to be conceived of Him, that are as much above the Reach and Comprehension of Humane Understandings, as is any Part of this Explication of the *H. Trinity*. Nay this may be affirmed, even of the Notion of *Self-Existence* ; but yet there cannot be an *Atheist* so silly as to Question it : Since it is not more Evident, that *One and Two* do make *Three*, than that there could never have been *any thing*, if there were not Something which was always, and never began to be.

28. Left Novelty should be Objected against this Explication, and therefore such should be prejudiced against it, as have a Veneration for Antiquity, we add, that it well agrees with the Account which several of the *Nicene* Fathers, even *Athanasius* himself, and others of the Ancients who treat of this Subject, do in divers places of their Works give of the Trinity: As is largely shewed by two very Learned Divines of our Church. And had it not been for the *School-*

men

men, to whom Christianity is little beholden, as much as some Admire them, we have reason to believe that the World would not have been troubled since the Fall of *Arianism*, with such Controversies about this Great Point, as it hath been, and Continues to be.

This Explication of the *B. Trinity* perfectly agrees with the *Nicene Creed*, as it stands in our Liturgy, without offering the least Violence to any one Word in it. Which makes our Lord Jesus Christ to be from God the Father by way of *Emanation*; affirming Him to be *God of God, very God of very God*, and Metaphorically expressing it by *Light of Light*; answerably to what the Author to the *Hebrews* saith of Him, *Chap. 1. 3. viz.* That he is Ἀπαύλας τῆς Δόξης, *The Effulgency of his Glory*, and χαρακτὴς τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, *The Character of his Substance*: And so is as much *Of one Substance with the Father*, as the *Beams* of the *Sun* are with the *Body* of it.

And since there have been of late, so many Explications or Accounts Published of this most Adorable Mystery, which have had little better Success than making Sport for the *Socinians*, I thought it very Seasonable now to Revive *That*, which I affirm with great Assurance to be the most Ancient one of all; much Elder than the Council of *Nice*; and to have much the fewest difficulties in it, and to be incomparably most agreeable to *H. Scripture*.

A
 D E F E N C E

Of the Foregoing

Propositions.

S I R,

THe Author of the *Twenty Eight Propositions* thanks you for the very Charitable Opinion you have expressed concerning him, in the Entrance into your Reflexions upon them; and hopes he shall always endeavour to deserve the Character of a Man so *Honest*, as *never to speak otherwise than he thinks*; and so *true to his Understanding*, as *always to make Reason one of his Guides in the Choyce of his Opinions*: He professing to believe, that the Use of Reason is so far from being to be Condemned in Matters of Religion, as no where else to be *so well* employed: And that it is infinitely unworthy of Almighty God, to conceive it possible for Him to Contradiet his Internal by his External Revelations. But so he must have done, should such Writings be of His inspiring, as are manifestly contradictory to the plain Dictates of Natural Reason,

which the Wise Man saith, *Is the Candle of the Lord.*

And Sir, our Author takes no less Notice of your Candour, in the Character you give, in the Words following, of his *Explication of the Doctrin of the H. Trinity* in those Propositions.

But after your Acknowledgment, That *he hath avoided a great many Contradictions, which those of your Party do charge on this Doctrin, as it is held by others ;* and that his Explication is a *Possible Scheme ;* and that *it is clear from any Contradictions to Natural Reason ;* you Object that, *besides some insuperable Difficulties, the Author hath not been able to avoid some Numerical Contradictions.* Now, as to the *insuperable Difficulties* with which you charge his Explication, since you acquit them from being Contradictions to *Natural Reason*, you mean, I suppose, that it is fraught with several Contradictions to *H. Scripture*: And I confess such Contradictions to be as insuperable Difficulties to us, as we are *Christians*, as those to *Reason* are, as we are *Men*. If this be your Meaning, the Author may well expect to have it shewn, what Texts of Scripture are contradicted by this Explication ; but if you mean otherwise, my Reply is, That you are not so shallow a Thinker as not to be aware, that there are also insuperable Difficulties in the Notion of *One God*, both as His Nature is described by all Christians, according to the Account given of Him in *H. Scripture* ; and as all Theists are compelled by Natural Light to conceive of Him. Nay you will frankly own, that there is not any one thing in the whole Universe, which doth not suggest insuperable Difficulties to an Inquisitive Mind.

And

And whereas, Sir, you Charge our Author with not being able to avoid some *Numerical Contradictions*, I confess I never before met with this distinction, but I think I understand it by your Description of it. You say that a *Numerical Contradiction* is an Error committed in the *summing up of things*. But how is he guilty of such Contradictions? If you mean that he hath made Contradictory Conclusions (or such a Conclusion) to several of his Premises, I cannot (though you do) excuse him from contradicting *Natural Reason*, any more than from contradicting *Himself*: And it appears from what follows, that *that* is your Meaning; for, after you had given the Sum and Substance of the First Thirteen Propositions, your Reflexion thereon is this: *One would think that such a Foundation being laid, the Conclusion must be wholly in favour of the Unitarians. For if the Father is Absolutely Perfect; if the Son and Spirit are not Absolutely Perfect, how shall we ever prevent this Consequence, therefore onely the Father is God? What is the Definition of God among all Divines and Philosophers? Is it not this, A Being Absolutely Perfect; or, a Being that hath all Perfections? But if so, than onely the Father having all Perfections, or being Absolutely Perfect, He must be the onely God, to the certain Exclusion of the other Two Persons; to the Exclusion of the Son and Spirit by Name, because 'tis affirmed here of them by Name, that neither of them is absolutely Perfect, or hath all Perfections. But this Author will shew us in his following Propositions, that, for all this, the Son is God, and so also is the Holy Ghost: That is, he will put out the Light of the Sun.*

And,

And, Sir, as you have now Represented our Author, you cannot but be sensible, upon second thoughts, of over great Modesty in your not having Charged him with *Natural* Contradictions; nay and of too great *Partiality* towards him in *Acquitting* him, as you have done, of such Contradictions. *He will instruct us*, say you next, *in his Premisses, that there is but One Who is God, and in the Progress and Conclusion, or, in the summing up the whole Reckoning, he will make it appear, that there are Three Beings, each of which is (singly and by Himself) God: which is the Numerical Contradiction that I Charged at first on his Hypothesis.* And I say, Sir, if you have not too incautiously represented him in these Words, he is as justly to be here Charged with a *Natural*, as with a *Numerical* Contradiction; except you will Affirm, that 'tis no Natural Contradiction to say, That *the Number One is as many as Three, or the Number Three is no more than One.* But, Sir, I must crave leave to say, that you have committed a great Oversight in Representing our Author as you have now done. For his First Proposition is, *The Name of God is used in more Sences than one in H. Scripture.* The second, *The most Absolutely Perfect Being is God in the Highest Sence.* The Third, *Self-Existence is a Perfection, &c.* The Fourth, *God the Father alone is, in reference to His manner of Existence, an Absolutely Perfect Being, because He alone is Self-Existent.* And from These, with the Five following Propositions, he infers in the Tenth, *That the Father alone is God in the Absolutely Highest Sence:* And in the Thirteenth, *That the God-head, or God in this Highest Sence, can be but one Numerically.* And therefore,

fore, Sir, you should not have made our Author say, (as you do) that there is *but One who is God*, without any Restriction, when you now see he saith, that there is but One who is God *in the Absolutely Highest Sense*: And that God in the *Absolutely Highest Sense*, can be but One *Numerically*. And whereas you say, That *he will make it appear that there are Three Beings, each of which is singly and by Himself God*, you should have said, *He will make it appear that there are Three Beings, each of which is God, but not in all the Self-same Respects*. And therefore I cannot as yet accuse him, either of any One *Natural* or *Numerical* Contradiction; if this be a Proper Distinction, which I will not dispute.

What remaineth of your Reflexions is chiefly a Charge of *Tritheism* against this Explication of the Trinity.

I. You say, *I acknowledge in these Propositions the Genuine Doctrine, and very Language of the Fathers, who wrote shortly after the Council of Nice, till the Times of the School-men*. And the Author is assured, that this Explication for Substance, is a great deal Elder than that Council. But he gives you his hearty Thanks for this free Concession of yours, because you have saved him the Pains of proving his *Last* Proposition: And I will therefore requite you, for him, in imitating *your* Brevity, as you say, you do *his*. But methinks you should also acknowledge, that the Authors Explication hath no inconsiderable Advantage on its side, in that you allow it to be of so great Antiquity. If the *Socinians* will not acknowledge *this* an Advantagious Circumstance, in all disputable

putable Points, they are certainly the onely Learned Men who have no Regard for *Antiquity*.

2. You add, *But the School-Divines, or the Divines of the Middle Ages, saw, and almost all the Moderns, that are well versed in these Questions, confess it, that this Explication is an inexcusable indefensible Tritheism.* And quickly after you say, *That the School-Divines, and, generally speaking, the most Learned of the Moderns, with the greatest Reason in the World, abhor making the Three Divine Persons, to be Persons in the Proper Sence of that Word: Which is to say, they are distinct intellectual Beings, and have different Substances in Number, tho' not in species or kind.* And you affirm, that the forementioned Divines do with the greatest Reason in the World abhor this, *Because they perceive it destroys the True and Real Unity of God; it taketh away his Proper, and Natural, and Numerical Unity; and leaveth onely a Certain Political and Oeconomical Unity; which is indeed onely an imaginary Unity.* Hereto I Answer,

1. That a Wise Man will think never the worse of any thing, merely for its having an Ugly Name given it: As you would account it no real Dishonour to the *Socinian Hypothesis*, should it be called *Ditheism*, which sounds every whit as ill as *Tritheism*. And you cannot deny it to be *Ditheism* in a certain sence, because it asserts *Two Gods*; one by Nature, and the other by Office; and that this God by Office, is to be *Honoured by all Men, even as they Honour the Father*, (according to his own Declaration) though but a Mere Man by Nature. And *this* grates every whit as much upon my Understanding, as any thing

thing in *this Explication* can on *yours* : And is as contradictory to Natural Reason in the Opinion of all *Trinitarians*, as any of their Explications are in the Opinion of *Socinians* ; who cannot but acknowledge, that *Honouring the Son even as the Father is Honoured*, is giving him that Honour which is truly and properly *Divine*, let them restrain it as much as they can.

2. Whereas you say, that this Explication *destroyeth the True and Real Unity of God, and therefore to be abhorred* ; I must grant, if it does so, it can not be too much abhorred ; but I would know from whence we are to learn, wherein consists His True and Real Unity. It must either be learned from Scripture or Reason, or both. But as to the *H. Scripture*, this indeed abundantly declareth the Unity of God, but it no where *distinguisheth* of Unity, nor saith of what *Nature* that Unity is which it ascribes to God. Were you never so well satisfied that *that Text* in *St. John's Epistles* is genuine — *These Three are One* ; you would say it proves nothing against the *Socinians*, because it saith not *in what Sence* the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are *One*. But I am sure our Author never spake a truer Word, than what he saith in his *Seventeenth Proposition*, concerning the real *Distinction* of the Three Persons in Scripture. And surely those whose Notions are most agreeable to the Letter, and most proper Sence of Scripture, when there is no apparent necessity of departing from them (as I think there is the greatest Necessity of keeping thereto in *this case*) if they happen to be in an Error, their Error is on the safer side.

And since those of your Opinion do so zealously contend for making the H. Scriptures the sole Rule of Faith, and profess that you will take nothing for a Point of Religion but what is found in the Bible, (wherein you do like *Protestants*, at least if you will acknowledge *that* to be there which is there by evident Consequence, as well as in express Words) ; since, I say, you do so, you of all Men should not be over dogmatical in determining a Point, which the H. Scripture is silent in. And then for *Reason*, such an Unity as our Author (after the Fathers) asserts, is not contradictory, or contrary, to any plain and evident Dictate thereof. This I adventure to Affirm with very great Assurance : And, Sir, your self must needs be of the same Mind, if you were in good earnest (as I can't think otherwise) in calling the Explication a *possible Scheme*, and owning that it is not contradictory in any of its parts to Natural Reason. But, Sir, (to speak my Mind freely) I will not, of all Men, go to School to the *School Divines* to learn what Reason saith on an Argument of this Nature ; and therefore neither to those *Modern Divines*, who pin their Faith upon their sleeves. If I could satisfy my self to be an Implicit Believer, I would a thousand times rather take the Ancient *Fathers* (and, it may be, *Philosophers* too) for the Guides of my Reason, than those Gentlemen who spent their time in the Weaving of Fine Cobwebs ; and particularly are so superfine upon the simplicity of the Divine Essence, as to render GOD Almighty (at least, to such a dull Understanding as mine) a no less *unconceivable* than incomprehensible Being ; and to *simplify*

fe Him rather into *Nothing*, than into *Simple Unity*.

3. That this Explication leaveth onely a certain *Political*, or *Oeconomical* Unity is only *said* by you; but the *Twenty Second* Proposition tells you the contrary, of which more anon.

4. This Explication doth not take away the *Numerical* Unity of the *God-head*, or of God in the Absolutely highest Sence, and the First Original of All things: For it expressly affirms the Necessity thereof, *Prop. 13th*.

5. It maketh the other Two Persons as much one with the First, and with one another, as they are, without the most apparent Contradiction, capable of being. One in so High a Sence, as that we want a Word, by which to express their Unity: And therefore that they are much more than *Specifically* One, as Three *Humane* or *Angelical* Persons are. Were I a *School-man* it should scape me hard, but I would add another distinction of Unity, between *Specificical* and *Numerical*, to express *this* Unity by; which I am sure would have more of a *Fundamentum in re*, than many of *their* Distinctions have. This Explication speaks as great a Unity between them, as is between the *Sun* and its *Splendor*, and the *Light* of both: And a greater than is between the *Vine* and its *Branches*; or than is between the *Fountain* and the *Streams* which flow from it: Which are Similitudes of the Ancients. I say, this Explication speaks the Unity of the Divine Persons, greater than the Unity of each of these; because, tho' they are most closely and intimately United, yet are not inseparable. And for the same reason, it speaks a greater Unity between them, than

is between our Souls and Bodies ; as appears by the *Twenty Second* Proposition. And *where* is he who will pretend to know how many Degrees, or Kinds of Unity are possible, or *actually* are ?

6. The inseparable Unity in *will* and *Nature* between the Three Persons, which that Proposition affirmeth not to have the least shadow of a Contradiction in it, and therefore is taken into this Explication, doth answer all the ends for which the Unity of the Deity was ever asserted. And therefore the Distinction asserted between the Three Persons, hath not the least Appearance of any one of the pernicious Consequents, which follow upon a *Plurality of Gods* ; and consequently there is *no reason in the world*, (tho' you say there is the *greatest*) why it should be abhorred by the *School-Divines*, or the *most Learned among the Moderns* ; or by any Mortal, learned or unlearned. For they are outwardly, and in reference to the Creation, perfectly One and the Same God, as concurring in all the same External Actions ; tho' in relation to *One Another*, there is a real Distinction between them. And it seems very wonderful, that this should be denied by any one who professeth himself a *Trinitarian* ; since there is no understanding what a Contradiction means, if a Being that *Begets*, and that which is *begotten* thereby, and a Third which *proceeds* from both, should not be really distinct from each other.

7. A Plurality of Gods hath generally been so understood, as to imply more than One independent, and (therefore likewise) Self-existent Deity, as the common Arguments against a Plurality of Gods do suppose ;

suppose; but it was never otherwise understood, than so as to import *separate* Deities. And never were there more zealous Asserters of the Unity of the Deity against the Pagans, than were divers of the Ancients to whom our Author is beholden for the Substance of this Explication. One of these was *Lactantius* (to pass by several others of the Three First Centuries) and I find him *thus* discoursing in the 29th. Chap. of his Fourth Book, *De Vera Sapientia*. *Fortasse querat aliquis, &c. Some one perhaps will ask, how when we say we worship One God, we can assert Two, viz. God the Father, and God the Son, &c. And to this Question the Father thus Answers, Quum dicimas Deum Patrem, &c. When we say God the Father and God the Son, we don't separate and part them asunder, &c. they have one Mind, one Spirit, one Substance. And, in the next Words, he saith in what sence they are One: Sed ille quasi exuberans Fons, &c. But the Father, is as it were the overflowing Fountain, the Son as a stream flowing from him: He like to the Sun, This like to a Sun-beam.* And this is the same Description of their Unity with one another, that the *Explication* gives. And I think there needs no more to be said in Defence thereof, against the odious Charge of *Tritheism* to any ingenuous and Free-minded Person.

Nor doth there need to be given any farther Answer to what remains in your Paper, that designs to prove this a *to be abhorred Tritheistical Explication*. But I must Clear it from *another* great Mistake in the Account you next give of it. You say that *the Hypothesis expressly acknowledgeth in each of the Two Persons, not onely whatsoever Properties can make them to be*
distinct

distinct intellectual Beings, and Substances; but also all the Attributes that are necessary to Essentiate a God, that is, to make Him a Perfect God; onely it saith the Father hath this peculiar ὡς ἀρχὴν or Priviledge, that He is First in order of Nature. He hath no Essential or Real Perfection more than the other Two Persons; onely He hath this Honour, that their Original is from Him. And hence you Conclude, that it is not possible to say what are Three GODS, if this be not an Account and Description of Three Gods.

But, Sir, doth our Author's Hypothesis give the FATHER no other Priviledge above the Son and H. Spirit, than his being *First in Order of Nature*, and their *Original*? Doth not the *Fourth Proposition* expressly say that he is *Self-Existent* too? And His being their *Original*, is so far from being the same thing with *Self-Existence*, that simply in it self considered, it doth not so much as necessarily suppose His *Self-Existence*. Doth he who saith, that the *Sun* is the Original of the Illustrious *Splendour* in the Heavens, and of the *Light* which pervades the World, in so saying affirm that it is *Self-Existent*? And I shall wonder, if *Self-Existence* be but an *Imaginary* Perfection, I should rather Conclude it the very greatest of all *Real* Perfections. How then can you say, That *this Hypothesis gives the Father no other Priviledge above the other Persons, but onely that He is First in Order of Nature*?

Again, Is not *Absolute Independance* a *Real* Perfection, and *Being the First Original of all things* another? But doth not the *Sixth Proposition* considered

dered with the *Fifth*, ascribe *both these* too to the *Father* onely ?

And whereas you say farther, That *this Hypothesis gives the Second and Third Persons all the Attributes that are necessary to Assentiate a God*, What Earnings will you make of *this* ? since it saith not that those which are ascribed to *them* (*viz.* infinite Goodness, Wisdom and Power,) are all that are necessary to Essentiate a God in the *Absolutely Highest Sence*, which the Name of *God* is ever to be understood in in Holy Scripture.

And now you can need no Answer to what you say in the last Words of this Paragraph, *viz.* The Perfections of the Deity that are Real, are Gods infinite Wisdom, Power, Goodness, Duration, and such like : Therefore the Son and Spirit are Gods in the Highest Sence of that word, if they have all those aforesaid real and positive Perfections of the Divine Nature ; tho' it be granted at the same time, that they are Originated from the Father. You need, I say, no Answer hereto, since you were now minded, that Self-Existence, Absolute Independence, and Being the First Original of All things, are Perfections peculiar to God the Father ; and that this is part of the *Explication*. And upon this Account *Athanasius*, *S. Basil*, *Gregory Nazianzen*, and *St. Chrysostom*, with several of the *Latin Fathers*, interpret those Words of our B. Saviour, *My Father is greater than I*, to have been spoken, not of His Humanity, but His Divinity ; as *Dr. Cudworth* hath shewed in his 599th. Page of his *Intellectual System of the Universe*. Nor certainly did our Lord ever say so little a thing, as that the Infinite *M A J E S T Y*
of

of Heaven and Earth is greater than any Mortal Man.

And having this Occasion to Mention Dr. Cudworth,, the Honour I have for the Memory of that Excellent Person, constraineth me to say, That the Account he gives of the Fathers Judgment of the *Trinity*, is not Represented as it ought to have been, in the former *Socinian Treatise of Considerations on the Explications thereof*. And I so word that most Learned Performance of the Doctor, because he was therein an *Historian*, rather than an *Explicator*.

Your next Paragraph begins with this Question, *A Father begets Two Sons that have all the Properties of the Humane Nature, in as great Perfection as their Father ; shall we deny that they are Men in the Highest Sence of that Word, because they are Originated from their Father ? And this, say you, is the very Case before us.* But, Sir, this is not (with your Leave) the very Case before us: 'Tis nothing like it, because 'tis the Perfection of no *Man*, to be *Self-Existent* ; nor are a Humane Fathers Sons immediately dependent on him for the Continuation of their Being, as the Two *Persons* are upon *God the Father*, as *Light* is upon the *Sun*, and as *Streams* on the *Fountain*. But if a Humane Father could be supposed to be *Self-Existent*, and that his Sons had the now mentioned kind of Dependence upon him, the Consequence must be, that *their* Nature is short of the Perfection of their *Fathers* Nature, notwithstanding the many Properties they agree in ; and therefore that they are not Men in so high a Sence, as *he* is a Man ; seeing the Humane Nature would be supposed capable of Perfections which they have
not,

not, but their Father *hath*. What follows of this Paragraph, is only applying the Point in Controversie to this Case; but I have said enough to shew that there is not the least Affinity between these Two Cases.

The Substance of what you farther Object against this *Explication*, is a Remark upon the *Twenty Second Proposition*: And you say, *In these few words consist the strength and Hopes of this Explication. The unconceivably Close Union in Will and Nature between the Three Gods, makes them to be One God.* I see, Sir, you as odiously word it as you can, but you would have lost nothing by it, had you kept to our *Author's Words*, and said *Three Persons*; or, if you had pleased, *Three distinct Proper Persons*, instead of *Three Gods*.

Well, Sir, the unconceivably Close Union in Will and Nature between the Divine Persons is that (as you say) *in which the strength and hopes of this Explication do consist.* But you Object, That this is as much as to say, that *they are One God by that very thing, which most incontestably declares them to be Three Gods.* And this you make out by this *Question, what is the Union of Will and Nature between distinct intellectual Beings, and different Substances*; is it any other but this, *in plain English, that they always will the same things, and their Natures and Substances are united in the same Properties, Attributes, or Perfections?* That is to say, as you proceed, *these Three intellectual Substances or Beings, are each of them Almighty, Omniscient, most Good and the rest*; why this is the very thing that makes them to be Three Gods. Next, you give us a Proof of this, but you might have saved your

self that labour; for 'tis readily granted, if this be *all* the Union that is between them. But in Answer to your Question, it must never be granted you that the inseparably Close Union between the Three Divine Persons, both in Will and Nature, is *no more* than their Union in the same *will* and *Properties*; for it is also their immediate Union in their *Substances*, (their Spiritual Substances) as the Union between our *Souls* and *Bodies* is in their *Substances*. And if they were acknowledged to be *separate* Substances, and United onely as you say, you would have made our Author ashamed of his *Explication*. But if, Sir, you think you may do it *however*, by saying that the Substance and Properties of the Divine Nature are the *self-same* thing; I will now content my self to say onely *this*, then you might have used the Word *Substances*, as well as *Properties* and *Attributes*; and then it would have appeared at first sight, that there is no force in your Objection. But your self doth also expressly here distinguish them, in saying, that *their Substances are united in the same Properties, Attributes or Perfections*.

If you ask me what Account can be given to the satisfaction of any Rational Person, of such an Union between the Substances of the Three Persons, I will Reply that when you give *me* an intelligible Account of the Union betwixt our *Souls* and *Bodies*, I do promise to give *you* a no less intelligible Account of the Union betwixt the Substances of the *Three Divine Persons*. Nay (as the *Twenty Second Proposition* tells you) the Union between our *Souls* and *Bodies* is *more* unaccountable to Reason, than is *this* Union;
be-

because *that* is an Union between Substances of Perfectly *unlike*, and even *contrary* Natures. In reciting that Proposition, you say *Contradictory* instead of *Contrary*; but I suppose this was the fault, not of your *Pen*, but of the *Press*.

But if you will say, that the Substances of our *Souls* and *Bodies* are onely united in their *Properties*; I say they are not *at all* united in *these*, because their *Properties* are of as different and contrary a Nature, as their *Substances*. But if they could be united in *these*, yet the Union of their Substances must be *more* than their being united in their *Properties*, except *my Soul* is as much united with *your Body* as with *mine own*; for the Essential Properties of all Souls and Bodies are the same.

And now, Sir, I hope you are sensible, that you might have spared your *Last Paragraph*, *viz.* *How is it possible that this Author should overlook such an Obvious Reasoning, or not be Satisfied with it?* And say I, *How is it possible that so Acute a Person as your Writings speak you to be, should be guilty of so plain a Flaw in that Reasoning, and take it to be so Obvious?* I shall give you no farther trouble, than while I desire you to take notice, That I have not troubled you with more words than needs must; and much less with *Finesses*, to use your Own Word; nor with any Subtle Distinctions, as much Enamoured, as you perceive I am, with the *School-men*; nor with any thing you may be tempted to call *Scholastical Cant*, or *Metaphysical Gibberish*; nor so much as with the Father's great word *ἐπιειχέρεας*. But my Answer is as plain as a *Pyke staff*, yet as full as plain, to all

the Reflections you have made upon the *Explication*. But whether it be to the *purpose* too, I must leave it to the Judgment of the fair and impartial Reader. But I can sincerely avow, That I have said nothing to any of your Objections, merely because for my Credits sake, (seeing I undertook to Reply to them) I must say *Something*: Nor hath a *Line* come from me which is not agreeable to the sense of my Mind; nor which I *think* not to be *pertinent*. As I also solemnly Profess, that since such Perfections and Operations, as are unquestionably *Proper* to the Deity, are attributed in H. Scripture to the *Son* and *H. Spirit*; and that I cannot be Satisfied by the extremely laboured Glosses and Criticisms of the *Socinians*, to depart from the most Obvious and Natural Sence of the Multitude of Texts wherein they are so; as doubting whether many Texts are to be found, which might not have more than one sence put upon them, by the same Labour and Art: And since Divine Honour is most Expressly declared to be due to the *Son*, *John* 5. 23. and He hath the Honour of such a Doxology, *Apocal.* 1. 6. as according to the Original, as well as our Translation, I remember not an Higher given to *God the Father* in all the New-Testament. And since too the Son and Spirit are all along most plainly described, as *distinct Persons* both from the *Father*, and from *One Another*, even as plainly as Words can do it; and yet all this while the *Unity* of the Deity is fully Asserted; I can not, for my life, Reconcile these things but by this *Ancient Explication* of the Trinity, which your self ingenuously acknowledges to be a *Possible Scheme*; and *Hereby*, I thank
G O D,

G O D, I can do it to my great Satisfaction.

That God Almighty would give us a Right Understanding in all the Points of our Christian Faith, and particularly in the *Great and Mighty One*, wherein you Differ from the Generality of Christians in all Ages; and that we may be sincere and unbyassed, and also Humble, in our Searches after Truth; not *leaning* over confidently to *our own Understandings*, since those that most improve them are most sensible of their being infinitely too shallow to comprehend Truths of *this* Nature especially, is the Humble and most Hearty Prayer of,

S I R,

Oftob. 19th.
1694.

Notwithstanding our being (as I suppose)
perfect Strangers, and our wide Dif-
ference in Opinion,

*Your Sincere Friend to Serve You in all
Christian Offices, &c.*



